THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Subsequent to acceptance of recommendations dated 28.08.2007 of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), *inter-alia*, that there should be no cap on the number of access provider in any service area, 120 new Unified Access Services (UAS) licences have been granted so far. Viewing the present tele-density of around 25, there are ample opportunities abailable to the new telecom licensees. Any such forecast by the existing telecom licensee(s) that new telecom licensees will collapse in three years, appears to be only speculative.

Broadband Connectivity

2187. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that broadband connectivity is very essential for the development of the country as a knowledge based society;

(b) if so, the steps taken and proposed to be taken by Government thereon;

(c) the details of the broadband subscribers in the country as on 31st December 2007, State-wise;

(d) whether China is far ahead of our country in broadband connectivity; and

(e) if so, the steps proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Government is very much aware that broadband connectivity is very essential for the development the country as a knowledge based society.

(b) Some of the major steps taken and proposed to be taken by the Government to proliferate broadband in the country are given in Statement-I (*See* below).

(c) There were 30,19,521 broadband subscribers as on 31st December 2007. State-wise details of Broadband Subscribers are given in Statement-II (*See* below).

(d) As per the information available on Internet, China is ahead of our country in broadband connectivity.

(e) Steps for proliferation of broadband have been summarized in Part (b) above.

Statement-I

Details regarding some of the major steps taken and proposed to be taken to proliferate broadband in the country

1. Broadband policy has been announced by the Government during 2004 for accelerated growth of Broadband applications, contributing growth of GDP and enhancement in quality of life through societal applications including tele-education, tele-medicine, e-governance, entertainment as well as employment generation.

2. In order to bring provisioning of broadband connectivity to rural areas under the purview of Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), the Indian Telegraph Rules

have been amended, stream IV has been added under the title "Provision of broadband connectivity to villages in a phased manner". The USOF is working on a scheme for providing financial assistance by way of subsidy for the broadband active infrastructure such as BTS (Base Transceiver Station) and by utilizing the existing passive infrastructure available with the Telecom service providers.

3. State owned Public Sector Unit, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has identified around 25,576 rural exchanges and has placed order of 1.6 million ports for deployment of broadband services and rural areas.
4. The Government has approved a Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme for providing support for establishing 100,000 Common Services Centers in 600,000 villages of India. The Scheme, as approved by the Government of India, envisions CSCs as the front-end delivery points for Government, private and social sector services to rural citizens of India, in an integrated manner. The objective is to develop a platform that can enable Government, private and social sector organizations to align their social and commercial goals for the benefit of the rural population in the remotest corners of the country through a combination of IT-based as well as non-IT-based servcies.
5. It is proposed to setup a National Knowledge network for providing broadband connectivity to knowledge Institutions in the country.
6. Department of Information Technology (DIT) has been promoting research and development in the area of Convergence, Communication and Broadband Technology as one of its major activities. Under this programme during the last three years, eight projects covering the area of Broadband Technologies have been funded.
7. Various exemptions in duties and taxes have been proposed in the Budget 2008-09 for Electronics/IT Industry.

Statement-II

Details of State-wise Broadband subscribers as on 31st December 2007

Sl.No.	State/Telecom Circle	Broadband Subscribers
1	2	3
1.	Andaman & Nicobar	964
2.	Andhra Pradesh	234099
3	Assam	12475
4.	Bihar (including Jharkhand)	37278
5	Delhi*	409057
6.	Gujarat	188628
7.	Haryana	40218
8.	Himachal Pradesh	6693
9.	Jammu & Kashmir	9597
10.	Karnataka	331937
11.	Kerala	140306
12.	Maharashtra (including Goa)	654308
13.	Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh)	80738

*Includes Noida, Gurgaon, Ghaziabad and Faridabad

1	2	3
14.	North East**	4856
15.	Orissa	20973
16.	Punjab	106892
17.	Rajasthan	57934
18.	Tamilnadu	406654
19.	Uttar Pradesh (including Uttaranchal)	110641
20.	West Bengal	165273
	TOTAL	30,19,521

**Includes Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland & Tripura

Issuance of Excess Spectrum

2188. SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that excess spectrum has been issued to some private GSM operators in excess of the license agreement;

(b) if so, the amount of loss incurred by Government thereon;

(c) whether any action is being initiated against the officials responsible for issuing excess spectrum to the private GSM operators; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEELAHMAD): (a) to (d) The initial spectrum has been allotted to the GSM operators based on their request and as per provisions of their respective Service Licensee Agreement subject to availability of spectrum. With growth of their services, additional spectrum, beyond the initial spectrum, has been allotted to GSM operators as per guidelines, orders and subscriber based eligibiltiy criteria in force at the time of allotment of such additional spectrum subject to its availability. Increased rate of revenue share is levied towards spectrum charges on total spectrum which includes additional spectrum.

The annual spectrum revenues have increased about 80 times during last decade.

Dilution of Government's Equity in BSNL

2189. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a proposal to dilute its 10 per cent equity in BSNL;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that BSNL has sufficient cash balance to provide for any expansion projects; and